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News Items from the School of Education of the University of Chicago

NEW AND SPECIALIZED COURSES IN EDUCATION

During recent years a number of the professions, such as law and medicine, have commanded genuine respect of the public because of their thorough mastery of their respective fields. If one traces the growth of the influence of these professions, one finds it accompanied by two very important changes in the training of the men who enter them. First, the time required for thoroughgoing preparation has gradually increased until three years in addition to the baccalaureate degree are required in most universities. In addition, the medical student serves for a year or more as interne in a hospital where both his practical and his theoretical training are continued. Secondly, the curricula of progressive professional schools have included a larger number of highly specialized courses each year as contrasted with general omnibus courses. The purpose of these changes has been to give students a definite and thoroughly scientific education and to make them experts along certain lines.

There have been similar developments in the training of educational leaders. City superintendents, principals, and supervisors are returning to the university in increasing numbers each year to work for higher degrees. As they have encountered professional problems in practical situations, they have found that the solution of these problems requires a broad background of experience, technical information, and specialized skills not included in their earlier professional training. Furthermore, the problem of school administration and supervision has become so complex and inclusive that it is inadvisable to try to give during a given year an equal amount of attention to all of the problems which a school presents. As a result, the successful superintendent and principal attack one problem after another, such as the budget and school finance, buildings and equipment, the selection of textbooks, the improvement of teachers in service, etc. In order to meet these

demands for thoroughgoing and specialized training in an effective way, the Department of Education of the University of Chicago has gradually changed the character and scope of its courses in the direction of clearly differentiated, intensive studies of educational problems. Notable progress has been made during the past year.

These changes have been made possible in several ways. First, the members of the department have been actively engaged for a number of years in concrete investigations of school problems through the general surveys in which they have participated and through quantitative measurements in particular fields. There has developed, as a result, a body of accurate, detailed information which is absolutely essential to the organization of effective specialized courses. Secondly, careful comparisons of the content of the courses given have enabled the members of the department to differentiate clearly between the fields covered in each. In this way energy has been saved for the organization of new types of courses. Thirdly, the addition of new members to the department is making possible a much broader scope of work than has been undertaken in the past. Furthermore, the fact that the University is organized on a quarter basis has enabled the department to limit each course to an intensive study of a given problem, or of a series of closely related problems.

In carrying out the new program three types of courses have been organized: (a) informational courses intended to summarize the facts now at hand and to start students in their investigations; (b) courses in scientific technique; and (c) courses carrying forward researches into unexplored fields. Examples of the (a) type are: School Surveys, School Buildings and Equipment, Administration of the Teaching Staff, Administration of Pupils, Curriculum, Classroom Methods, General Teaching Technique, Administration of Finance, Physical and Mental Development of Pupils, Improvement of Teaching Through the Use of Tests, High-School Administration, Elementary-School Administration, etc. Class (b) includes Elementary and Advanced Statistics, Laboratory Methods, introductory and advanced, Development of the Technique of Tests, and Historical Methods. Class (c) will include courses in Scientific Investigation of Reading, Arithmetic, and Spelling, and in the advanced treatment of such topics as are mentioned in the (a) group of courses.